

# Aboriginals and Black

Australian 24th April 1968

## Power

~~SIR~~ The report in *The Australian* of my address to the conference of the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders was in my view, and that of many others present, rather sensational.

In the course of a 20-minute address surveying the problems of organisation, leadership and policy encountered by FCAATSI in the past year, I perhaps unwisely related some of these problems to aspects of the American Black Power movement, which I mentioned once.

At no stage did I urge the wholesale adoption of Black Power ideas in Australia. However I did urge Aboriginals to take a greater leadership role in the organisation, since Aboriginals can best represent Aboriginals, and best lead and inspire their fellows to follow the path to self-respect and dignity.

To my mind Black Power as practised in the U.S. has two main features, namely advocacy of an active leadership role by minority (black) people themselves in order to solve their own problems, and a tendency to subordinate general principles to short-term group self-interest.

While I give qualified

support to the first point, as indeed does the Commonwealth Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Mr W. C. Wentworth, I am opposed to the second.

Thus I am resolutely opposed to the use of violence by either side in the American racial situation and of course here also.

If my address caused anything which could be described as "uproar" it was not because of my advocacy of Aboriginal leadership, as this has been advocated year after year at FCAATSI conferences, and notably last year by Mr Charles Rowley.

One further point, however, did lead to some discussion. This was my observation that the leadership of FCAATSI, of both races, has in the past tended to concentrate somewhat on the problems of legal and political rights rather than on economic and social problems.

I made the conjecture that this might be due in part to the fact that most executive members of FCAATSI are better off financially than most Aboriginals.

It was meant as a piece of self-criticism intended to remind all present that we were attempting to represent a people who on the whole live in poverty in this rich country of ours. Unfortunately

ly, it was understood by some as a criticism of a few well-off Aboriginals.

This was not my intention. Indeed there is value, as Mr Charles Perkins has said, in seeing and hearing from well-dressed, prosperous and articulate Aboriginals. — **A. VARRIE PITTOCK**, executive member, FCAATSI, Yackaton Avenue, Aspendale, Victoria.

## 'Chortling up their sleeves!'

I'LL BET members of the Communist Party of Australia are chortling up their sleeves over the news that Mr Wentworth, the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, has promised Aboriginals in the Northern Territory their own land to set up a cattle station.

For years this sort of thing has been one of the major points of communist propaganda in Australia and one of their minor successes to date has been to lead the strike of drovers at Wave Hill cattle station.

Well-known communist agitators have been behind this strike and now Mr Wentworth has, as it were, placed the seal of official approval on their actions.

Perhaps Sir Robert Menzies had good reason for excluding Mr Wentworth from the ministry for so long. — **JFSS**, Blacktown, NSW.